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PECTS OF
THE OLD
TESTAMENT

H. ST. J. THACKERAY

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SOME ASPECTS OF THE GREEK OLD TESTAMENT



NOTE

THE Arthur Davis Memorial Lecture was founded in 1917, under the auspices of the Jewish Historical Society of England, by his collaborators in the translation of "The Service of the Synagogue," with the object of fostering Hebraic thought and learning in honour of an unworldly scholar. The Lecture is to be given annually in the anniversary week of his death, and the lectureship is to be open to men or women of any race or creed, who are to have absolute liberty in the treatment of their subject.

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BY

H. ST. J. THACKERAY
M.A., ["]Hon. D.D.

WITH A FOREWORD BY
M. GASTER

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FOREWORD

THE occasion which brings us here together is the commemoration of the late Mr. Arthur Davis. The commemoration of the men of the past is the homage which the present pays to their work and their achievements. The longer the distance is which separates us from them, the more able are we fully to appraise the value of their work, and at the same time to realize the progress which we have made and which was due to the initiative which they have taken. Such a commemoration acts also as a stimulant to take up the thread where they have dropped it, and to continue the work on the lines of our predecessors.

In a way, this corresponds with the Jewish practice of celebrating the anniversary of the dead. On such occasions, members of the family and scholars will come together and study for a while the Bible and portions of the Rabbinic literature, and also some of the works of the deceased. The highest aim of man is claimed to be the glorification of the name of God through his life, and what greater glorification can be conceived, from a

religious point of view, than to continue the study of the sacred Scriptures, and to contribute to the further progress of human knowledge and of higher ideals? This study, which is presumed to have been pursued by the deceased, and which is called "Limmud," is therefore taken up again by the children, and it concludes fittingly with the Kaddish, which is nothing else than a hymn of glorification of God.

The lecture which we are anticipating now may fittingly be termed also such a "Limmud," especially as the subject of it is a presentation from new points of view of the oldest translation of the Bible, and moreover this commemoration happens to be also the real anniversary of the day of the death.

Now, if there was any man in this community who had made the Bible the centre of his studies, who had bestowed loving attention upon the text, and had endeavoured to solve the problem of the Biblical accents, it was unquestionably our friend the late Arthur Davis. He understood that much of the beauty of the Bible and of the Hebrew language is intimately intertwined with those tiny little dots and marks which mean so much, and yet which are usually passed over with but

scant attention and little understanding. To Arthur Davis they meant much. They were the keyboard to the harmony of the Hebrew language, and he could detect through them the echo of the celestial songs set to the rhythm of the Hebrew language. He therefore was also best qualified to realize the poetic harmony and the depths of feeling enshrined in our prayers, and therefore the community owes to him one of the best prayer-books which they could command. It is befitting therefore that the Bible should again be the centre of to-day's commemoration, which should then assume the character of a real "Limmud." The importance of the Greek translation will soon be made manifest to us by our learned lecturer. Still, there is one aspect upon which I venture to touch. It is the importance it has for the understanding of the Hebrew Bible—nay, for our knowledge of the Hebrew language. It is well known that Hebrew, as such, had ceased to be the language of the people, even in Palestine, for more than two thousand or two thousand five hundred years. It became the language of the scholar, and our knowledge of it therefore rests only upon literary tradition, such as has been handed down to us orally from generation to

generation. How much has been lost of it during its journey through the centuries is now a matter of speculation, and how much can be relied upon for accuracy and correctness not only in the interpretation of the language, but even in pronunciation, is a matter of keen investigation, and very often of doubtful results. A very important element in assisting us in the knowledge of the language are the old translations, and of these the oldest is the Greek, especially of the Pentateuch. I have recently formulated some views as to the origin of that translation which run counter to views hitherto universally accepted, and no doubt our lecturer will have something to say on that head. But leaving the question of origin aside, no one can gainsay the transcendent value of that Greek translation. How difficult the understanding of our Bible is can best be shown by the innumerable commentaries, and by the no less innumerable translations which have been attempted ; and every one, more or less, has had recourse to the help which the Greek translation known as the Septuagint can offer in the elucidation of the many obscure passages.

It is a curious fact that we Jews have practically neglected the study of the Septuagint. I can only mention two men who

have done real service in these studies. They are separated from one another by close upon a century. One is that famous scholar, Rabbi Zacharias Frankel, the director of the Jewish Theological Seminary of Breslau, at whose feet I was still able to sit some fifty years ago. He, the great master of Rabbinic learning, was also master of the Greek language. To him we owe that unsurpassed translation of Josephus's work against Apion, the first apologetic writing against an Egypto-Greek Anti-Semite. Frankel made, then, the Septuagint the subject of his investigations, which prove of fundamental importance. Only a man possessed of such vast Rabbinic learning could penetrate into the inner spirit and character of the Greek translation, and show its close dependence upon the Palestinian Midrash and Halacha. His *Vorstudien zur Septuaginta* (Leipzig, 1841) and his *Ueber den Einfluss der Palästinischen Exegese auf die Alexandrinische Hermeneutik* (Leipzig, 1851) have thus far been the only valuable contributions made by Jewish scholars. And now in our times, Professor Margolis, of the Dropsie College, is the only scholar I can mention who has undertaken profitable work on the Septuagint. On the other hand, I have only to mention Tischendorff, Largarde, Swete, and

last, but not least, Brooke and McLean, to point to one great scholar after another who has appeared during the same period that separates Frankel from Margolis. It is to McLean that we are indebted for the best critical edition of the Septuagint now in progress.

It was a very felicitous choice to invite Dr. St. John Thackeray to give us a lecture on this very book. There is no scholar better qualified for the task, and no one who will give us more independent investigations and newer aspects of that book than our lecturer. To him we owe in the first place the best edition of the famous letter of Aristeas, and also an excellent English translation. Dr. Thackeray has dealt with the Septuagint in its relation to the Jewish liturgy in his well-known "Schweich Lectures" and he has given us recently the new critical edition of Josephus, with an independent English translation, of which the first volume has just now appeared in the Loeb series. We have every reason, therefore, to look forward with keen anticipation to another scholarly contribution to a subject with which Dr. Thackeray is so intimately acquainted, and from which we are sure to carry away much instruction and great literary benefit.

M. GASTER.

SOME ASPECTS OF THE GREEK OLD TESTAMENT

I AM deeply sensible of the honour of being invited to deliver the Arthur Davis Memorial Lecture, while painfully aware of my disqualifications for the task. A devotion of many years to Jewish studies is my sole claim to address you to-day. Of the scholar whom we are met to commemorate I cannot speak from personal knowledge. But I know something of his arduous and loving labours upon the services of the synagogue and your beautiful songs of Zion; and the saintly and dedicated character, attested by those who knew him, of one who to a zeal for his nation added an ardour of scholarship transcending barriers of creed and nationality, has a universal appeal. There is, however, another whom I cannot but recall on this occasion, and I hope you will permit me to link with the name of Arthur Davis that of a kindred spirit, more recently taken from us. For it was under the auspices of the late Dr. Israel Abrahams that I first had the honour of lecturing on the Septuagint to a Jewish

audience nearly twenty years ago. The memory of that humane, large-hearted and generous scholar, kindly counsellor to the tiro and sage commentator on the Gospels from his stores of Rabbinic lore, I, as one of his many debtors, feel it a pleasure and a duty to recall to-day.

To you, Mr. Chairman, I must own that the announcement which reached me recently of your gracious intention to preside at this meeting caused me some misgivings. The subject of my lecture is one on which my opinion on some points conflicts with yours, and I must ask your indulgence if I attempt to defend my own. I was not aware, when I penned this address, that I should find myself in the equivocal position of arguing with the occupant of the chair. I shall, however, be prepared for and welcome correction.

I have called the venerable Scriptures of which I propose to speak "The Greek Old Testament." That name begs no questions: the customary term "Septuagint" rests on a discredited legend, and now even the claim to the title "the Alexandrian Bible" has been disputed. But it must be remembered that there were later Greek versions of Palestinian origin; on these I shall but touch,

confining myself mainly to the older work commonly associated with Alexandria.

The translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek is a tribute at once to the triumphs of Hellenism, whose speech through the victorious career of Alexander the Great became the *lingua franca* of the ancient world, and to the liberal spirit of Judaism, which, refusing to conceal its treasures in a tongue now unintelligible to the majority of its far-flung masses, threw them open to the world at large. Whatever the land of its birth, Alexandria, with its immense Jewish colony, was unquestionably the focus from which the version spread throughout the Mediterranean world, as the Bible, first of the Jewish Dispersion, afterwards of the Christian Church. The cosmopolitan Alexandria fostered the mating of Hebrew and Greek thought; the ripe product of such union appears to perfection in such a work as the Book of Wisdom. Palestine, always more keenly alive to the attendant perils of Hellenism, and ere long destined to be the battle-ground in defence of all that Jews held dear, viewed the innovation of a Greek version of its Scriptures with natural misgivings. Rabbinical opinion fluctuated, but was at first not unfavourable; it is pleasant

to find, in debates on this question, the blessing of Noah, "God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem" (Gen. ix. 27), interpreted by some large-hearted scholar to mean that the most beautiful possession of Japheth, namely, the Greek language, should find a place in the tents of Shem.¹ The subsequent alienation of the Palestinians from the old Greek version was due, not so much to objection to the use of a foreign tongue as partly to the claims of exact scholarship, which demanded more adequate versions of the current Hebrew text; partly, it must be admitted, to the appropriation of the older translation by the Christians and to acrimonious and baseless charges against them of perverting the text. But whatever our attitude to those controversies of the past, the Greek Bible, inherited by the Church from the Synagogue, may be regarded as the common property of both. To the ancient world it was the means of opening the eyes of an immensely wider public to "the wondrous things of the law"; to the modern scholar it is invaluable as a version anterior to the Masoretic text, which it not infrequently enables us to correct.

¹ Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba, in the Gemara to T. B. *Megillah*, i. 8 (quoted by Bentwich, *Hellenism*, p. 252).

The origin of the Greek Bible is shrouded in legend. The familiar story contained in the so-called Letter of Aristeas tells how Demetrius Phalereus, librarian of Ptolemy Philadelphus, drew the attention of the king to a serious gap in the Royal Library through the absence of the Jewish law, a translation of which was needed ; how correspondence ensued between the king and Eleazar, the high-priest at Jerusalem ; how an embassy was sent to Palestine under Aristeas and another courtier ; how seventy-two elders, selected six from each tribe, were despatched with a copy of the Law, written in letters of gold, to Alexandria ; of their entertainment at a seven days' banquet and the hard questions by which their wisdom was tested ; and how finally, in seventy-two days on the island of Pharos, they accomplished the translation, which was cordially welcomed both by the Jewish community and by the King.

That much of this tale is fantastic has long been recognized. The whole tone of the letter betrays a Jewish author, masquerading as a Greek. Some of its absurdities and anachronisms were exposed once for all in the eighteenth century by Humphrey Hody, Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford. Deme-

trius, as he showed, was not the librarian of Philadelphus. The translation, he maintained, was not made in obedience to a royal mandate, but was the spontaneous production of the Jewish colony. The introduction of the seventy or seventy-two translators was justly ridiculed. The origin of this company has now been traced to an episode in the Torah itself, in the narrative of the lawgiving. They are, it appears, no other than the seventy elders who accompanied Moses up the lower slopes of Sinai, forming a link between him and the people, and were identified in later Jewish imagination with the seventy translators, the intermediaries between the lawgiver and Israel of the Dispersion.

Then in the nineteenth century came a partial rehabilitation of the Letter of Aristeas. In 1870, when the sands of Egypt were beginning to yield up long-buried documents, the Italian Professor Lumbroso wrote: "There is not a court title, an institution, a law, a magistracy, an office, a technical term, a remarkable turn of language in this letter . . . which is not found registered in the papyri or the inscriptions and confirmed by them."¹

¹ *Recherches sur l'économie politique de l'Egypte sous les Lagides*, p. xiii.

This slightly exaggerated statement must be modified by the evidence of the far larger collection of papyri now in our hands. These indicate that the titles and formulas in question are those of the later, not the earlier, Ptolemaic age. But the author is, at any rate, an Alexandrian, thoroughly conversant with the official language in use at the court of the Ptolemies. I should myself assign to his work a date between 150 and 100 B.C. Schürer, on account of the picture drawn of the friendly relations existing between Egypt and Palestine, would throw the date as far back as the end of the third century B.C., i.e. to within little more than half a century of the reign of Philadelphus.

Two statements in the Letter may, I think, be accepted without reserve. The work, we are told, was the result of collaboration. "And so they proceeded to carry it out," writes Aristeas, "arriving at an agreement on each point by comparing each other's work; the appropriate rendering agreed on was then recorded" (§ 302). The procedure described is perfectly natural; there is nothing here of the miracle—a fabrication of later centuries—by which the translators were locked into separate cells and all produced identical

versions. Again, the completed work was read to and approved by the Jewish community, before being submitted to the king (§ 308). The king's *imprimatur* is relegated to a secondary position, and whatever share, if any, he may have taken in the matter, I should infer that the work was produced for their own purposes by the Jewish colony itself.

So far, then, as we can penetrate behind fancy to sober fact, the Greek Bible appears to have been the spontaneous production of the large Jewish colony at Alexandria. The first instalment, the version of the Law, goes back to the beginning of the third century B.C.; we have quotations from it before the close of that century. It may have been countenanced by Philadelphus, a known patron of literature, but was mainly due to a pious determination of the Jewish residents to understand the Scriptures which they heard read in the synagogues. The Aramaic paraphrase which served the needs of their Palestinian brethren was unintelligible to these immigrants, who demanded a version in their adopted tongue. Internal evidence suggests that the version of the Law was produced by a company, probably a small company; and that it was followed in the second century, when the

practice of reading a second lesson was introduced, by a version of the bulk of the Prophets, the work of a second company. By the end of that century, as we know from the Prologue to Ben Sira's translation of his grandfather's work, portions of the third division of the Canon—the Writings—had also appeared in a Greek dress. These latest renderings are more casual enterprises, undertaken by individuals lacking the sense of responsibility felt by the official translators of the Law and the Prophets.

Such, in general, was the view of the origin of the Greek Bible held by nineteenth-century scholars. Whatever other elements in the Aristeas story might be questioned, the Alexandrian origin of the work was universally accepted. But now even this “rooted idea” has been challenged. In the third of his Schweich Lectures on the Samaritans, delivered in 1923, Dr. Gaster has stoutly contested it and propounded some new and revolutionary theories. I hesitate to oppose so redoubtable an antagonist, but, having in a previous course of Schweich Lectures upheld the older view, I feel called upon to attempt a reply.

Briefly stated, Dr. Gaster's contention is that the Septuagint is a Palestinian work.

The translation, not intended as an exact replica of the Hebrew, was made from "the popular Bible or Koine"; it was a first step towards a Targum and was written for the masses, but not for use in divine service. In relation to the outside world, it had a further apologetic motive. "It was first and foremost an answer to Greek pretensions" (p. 123), being stimulated by opposition to "the Greek wave which overwhelmed the East" and "threatened to sweep away every national faith and every national literature" (p. 116). As other Oriental nations sought to confront this invasion of Hellenism by writing their own histories and magnifying their antiquity, so the Jews "carried the war into the enemy's camp by translating their own literature into Greek" (*ibid.*). This theory of the Palestinian origin of the LXX is based partly upon the "profound impress" of Palestinian exegesis traceable in the translation; partly upon the close relation of its text to that of the Samaritan Pentateuch. The Samaritans furnish Dr. Gaster with two further arguments. In some MSS. of the LXX readings are occasionally quoted from a document called the "Samaritanicon." That document is lost, but reason has recently been shown for the belief that it

was written, not, as was once supposed, in Aramaic, but in Greek; the Samaritans, it appears, like the Jews, possessed a Greek version of their own Scriptures.¹ Had the Samaritans of that day been confined, as they are now, to a little colony at Nablus, this argument would carry weight, as evidence of a Greek version produced on Palestinian soil, and might lend support to a belief that the Greek Pentateuch of the Jews originated in the same quarter. But, in fact, Egypt had its own Samaria and a large Samaritan colony, as we learn both from the papyri and from Josephus, in a passage which Dr. Gaster himself adduces in support of his theory. Josephus (*Ant.* xiii. 74 ff.) describes a dispute which took place about 150 B.C. between the Jewish and Samaritan residents in Alexandria concerning the rival claims of the respective temples at Jerusalem and on Mount Gerizim. A formal debate was held in the presence of King Ptolemy Philometor, who, according to Josephus, decided in favour of the Jews and put their opponents to death; the Samaritan account, I understand, reverses the verdict.

¹ Dr. S. Kohn, "Samareitikon und Septuaginta," in *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, year 38, pp. 1-7, 49-67. I am indebted for this reference to Dr. Cowley.

In this incident Dr. Gaster finds "the real historical substratum for the whole Aristreas legend" (p. 118).

In reply to this theory I would, in the forefront, emphasize two chronological considerations. In the battle between Judaism (especially Egyptian Judaism) and Hellenism a sharp line must be drawn between the third and the second centuries B.C. As the result of the battle of Panion in 198 B.C. Palestine passed from the control of Egypt to that of Syria.¹ The mild and generally popular sway of the Ptolemies was replaced by the harsh domination of the Seleucids, culminating in the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabæan revolt. In the third century this fierce antagonism had not broken out; the peaceful background portrayed in the letter of Aristreas, reflecting the period before the Seleucid conquest, was what led Schürer to assign to it so early a date.

Again, the dispute between the Jews and Samaritans at Alexandria took place under Ptolemy VII, Philometor (182-146), actually, as we can infer from Josephus,² about 150 B.C.,

¹ Mahaffy, *Empire of the Ptolemies*, 292 f.

² "In the times of Alexander (Balas)," i.e. 150-146 B.C.

not, as Dr. Gaster would appear to suggest, under Ptolemy II, Philadelphus, a century earlier. By that time the Greek version of the Law had firmly established itself and been used by Jewish historians, and an appeal on its behalf to the reigning monarch would be the more intelligible if it was believed to have obtained the *imprimatur* of his greater predecessor. If the Samaritan party to the dispute could produce a Greek version (the "Samariticon") in support of their claims, it is reasonable to suppose that it, too, was the production of their own Alexandrian colony. If there is any real connection between this incident and the Aristeas story, I think a reflection of the debate might be found in the solemn imprecation upon any revision of the Greek Pentateuch, by way of addition, transposition or omission, with which that story closes; ¹ there is the answer to these Samaritan pretensions.

The impress of Palestinian exegesis, if established, may be explained by the friendly and intimate relations between the Jews of Palestine and Egypt in the third century. At a still later date the prologues to Sirach and 2 Maccabees indicate a close intercourse between the

¹ Aristeas, § 311.

two communities. Hebrew MSS. find their way to Alexandria,¹ and the Palestinians urge their Egyptian brethren to imitate them in keeping the newly instituted Feast of Dedication.²

That the Greek Pentateuch was prompted by any apologetic motive I should gravely doubt. An apology addressed to an outside educated public must have pretensions to style. Undoubted instances of such "apologies," penned for Greek readers, are to be found in the Letter of Aristeas, the works of the Hellenistic historians like Demetrius based upon the LXX, and, above all, in the *Antiquities* of Josephus, modelled on the Greek masters. Such artificial productions might justly be described as an attempt "to carry the war into the enemy's camp"; but the Greek Pentateuch, with its uncouth vernacular style, surely never aspired to such rivalry.

Evidence for the use of the LXX in the synagogues—not, of course, as a substitute for the Hebrew, but as a Targum for the unlearned—is, I admit, deficient; but that it

¹ Prologue to Sirach. The grandson finds a copy of his grandfather's work in Egypt, where he translates it, explaining to his readers the imperfections of the Greek Bible, with which a familiarity on their part is presumed.

² 2 Macc. i. 9.

was intended for the masses Dr. Gaster is prepared to allow, and it is perhaps not unreasonable to regard the synagogue as the place where such instruction would be imparted.

The Alexandrian origin of the LXX is, to my mind, conclusively proved by the concurrence of all external evidence, both Egyptian and Palestinian. The Egyptian evidence is not confined to the Aristeas story. In Philo's life of Moses we have an account of an annual festival in memory of the translation, which is valuable because he is describing what actually took place in his day. After repeating the familiar story, he proceeds: "For this cause there is held to this day every year a festival and assembly (*πανήγυρις*) on the island of Pharos, to which not Jews only but multitudes of others sail across, to pay reverence to the spot on which the translation first shed its light and to render thanks to God for a benefit, ancient yet ever new. After the prayers and thanksgivings some pitch tents on the shore, others recline on the sand, regaling themselves under the open sky with their relatives and friends, and regarding the beach on that occasion as more luxurious than a palace."¹ In Philo's time, then, the transla-

¹ *Vita Mosis*, ii. 41 f.

tion was associated with a particular day in the Jewish calendar; and the picnic "Feast of the LXX" which he describes must have had an origin independent of, possibly older than, the Letter of Aristeas. If there is any connexion between the two, we should rather expect, from other instances, that it was the feast which created the legend to account for it. And here Rabbinical evidence comes in and enables us, I think, to fix a precise date for the anniversary. The Alexandrian festival was by the Palestinians regarded as a black fast-day. "On the 8th of Tebeth," we read in an appendix to the *Megillath Taanith*:¹ "The Law was written in Greek in the days of King Tolmai, and darkness came upon the world for three days." Though the word here used is "written" not "translated," and mere transliteration of the Hebrew in Greek characters might be intended, the mention of King Ptolemy favours the assumption that feast and fast are identical. If so, Philo's picnic-feast took place practically at the winter solstice, at the season when the Palestinians kept their feast of *Hanukkah*, otherwise known as the "Feast of Lights" or "the feast of

¹ In Neubauer's edition, *Anecdota Oxoniensia, Semitic Series*, vol. i, part vi, Oxford, 1895.

tabernacles in the month Chislev.”¹ Philo’s allusion to the erection of tabernacles (*σκηναῖ*) on the beach and his repeated use of metaphors drawn from light and illumination corroborate the belief that the occasion is that of the mid-winter feast. The Septuagint commemoration ceremony possibly attached itself to the Alexandrian *Hanukkah* or to some pagan “shortest day” festival, but in any case has not been derived from the Aristeas legend.

Further Rabbinic evidence connects the translation with Alexandria; acquaintance being shown with the Aristeas story in its later distorted form, with mention of the separate cells. The theory that the translation was produced in Palestine and was subsequently taken over by the Jews of Egypt has no support in tradition.

This united external testimony is borne out by internal evidence. Here I should not stress the fact that the LXX Greek finds its closest parallels in the Egyptian papyri, because our papyri are practically confined to Egypt, and from what we know of the vernacular in use elsewhere the *κοινὴ διάλεκτος*, as its name implies, was a “common” language, with but few dialectical variations. But I

* 2 Macc. i. 9.

should attach weight to occasional touches of local colour in passages relating to Egypt. Thus, to take one instance from the translator of Isaiah, the word שֶׁבַר ("strong drink") elsewhere transliterated by him as *σίκερα*, when he reaches "the vision of Egypt" is identified with the local beverage—the "beer" to which, as we know from Strabo, the Alexandrians were so strongly addicted.¹ Equally significant are a few scattered allusions to Greek mythology. Keren-happuch, the fair daughter of Job, in the Greek bears the name of "Amaltheia's horn,"² the translator perhaps regarding that emblem of fruitfulness, notwithstanding its associations with the goat which suckled the infant Zeus, as more complimentary to the young lady than the Hebrew "horn of eye-paint," rather suggestive of a Jezebel. Again, as I have mentioned elsewhere,³ in the grand picture of a theophany in the psalm of Habakkuk, there has crept into one of our Greek texts, only to be promptly suppressed, a veiled reference to the winged sandals of Perseus (in the Hebrew "Resheph"). How such blasphemy

¹ ζύθος, Isa. xix. 10; cf. Strabo xvii. 799, τῷ ζύθῳ τὸ πολὺ φῦλον χρῆται τῶν Ἀλεξανδρέων.

² Job xlvi. 14.

³ *The Septuagint and Jewish Worship* (Schweich Lectures, 1920), p. 53 f.

ever intruded into the Alexandrian Bible is mysterious ; its appearance in a Palestinian version is incredible.

I do not deny that the Greek Bible that has come down to us contains a Palestinian element, in some of the latest books in the Hebrew Canon. The old Alexandrian version of the book of Daniel (extant only in a single MS.) was soon supplanted by that of Theodotion ; and reason has been shown for assigning a similar origin to the version of Ezra-Nehe-miah known as *z Esdras*, and possibly also to that of Chronicles. A variety of style in certain portions of the Greek books of Samuel and Kings indicates that an older and shorter Alexandrian version, omitting discreditable episodes, has been amplified by a representative of the same Palestinian-Asiatic school. But this later work generally betrays itself by its endeavour to preserve with literal accuracy niceties of Hebrew idiom, and is distinguishable from the bulk of the translations of purely Alexandrian origin.

I pass to another and more difficult question : What was the nature of the text from which the translation was made ? Here again we are met by a revolutionary and astonishing

theory. In a work of which the first part only has appeared (*Die Transkriptionen von der Septuaginta bis zu Hieronymus*, part i, 1925), Herr Wutz maintains that the translators had no Hebrew MSS. before them at all: all that they had to work upon was a transliterated text, i.e. the Hebrew written in Greek characters. Translation has been preceded by transliteration, and the Alexandrians are separated by one remove from the Hebrew exemplars. Though put forward as new, this theory was, in fact, propounded over a hundred and fifty years ago by another German, Tychsen, in a forgotten work.¹ The twentieth-century scholar, like his eighteenth-century predecessor, builds great hopes on his apparently independent discovery. Criticism of a work still incomplete would be premature. I venture to doubt whether much new light is to be looked for from this theory, whatever element of truth it may prove to possess. But the author has done a service in bringing to the front facts which have perhaps received insufficient attention from Septuagint critics.

That the Hebrew text, early in the Talmudic

¹ *Tentamen de variis codicis Heb. Vet. Test. MSS. generibus*, 1772. I owe my knowledge of this work to my friend Canon A. Lukyn Williams.

period, was transcribed in Greek or other foreign characters, seems to be established by Rabbinic statements, though the practice is discountenanced and the references to script and translation are confused and it is not always clear which is intended. Whether the practice goes back to a pre-Christian date is unknown; some passages of doubtful import in the Letter of Aristeas¹ have been thought to refer to it. We know of one concrete instance of such a transliterated text and possess fragments of it: in Origen's great work, the *Hexapla*, produced about A.D. 230, a transcription of the Hebrew in Greek characters occupied the second column, next to the Hebrew itself. It has been commonly assumed that this transliteration was Origen's own work, but it is perhaps more natural to suppose that he derived it, like the Greek versions in the parallel columns, from an earlier source. Lastly, there are the instances of transliterated words occurring sporadically throughout the LXX, rare in the Pentateuch, increasing in the historical books, and specially frequent in the later version of Theodotion. On these isolated transliterations, regarded as relics of a complete text similar to Origen's second column,

¹ Especially §§ 15 and 30.

Herr Wutz largely bases his theory. As I said, criticism of a work of which half only has appeared would be premature; but among the masses of instances quoted I have failed to find any that are wholly convincing. Causes of confusion are manifold, and to prove that an error can only be attributed to the use of a Hebrew-Greek script, and to no other cause, is exceedingly difficult. Over against the uncertain instances quoted by Herr Wutz must be set innumerable and undoubted examples of confusion of Hebrew letters, whose Greek equivalents have no corresponding resemblance. A common instance is the confusion of *Resh* and *Daleth*, causing interchange, e.g., of Aram and Edom. From the habitual confusion of certain letters which have no resemblance in the archaic Hebrew script, the late Dr. Driver could deduce that the translators' MSS. were written in an early and transitional form of the square characters, probably Palestinian.¹ Of such instances, proving direct contact with the Hebrew, Herr Wutz takes insufficient account. According to his theory, all these errors of Hebrew origin must have come into the text at the first stage, when the transliterations were made,

¹ *Notes on the Hebrew Text of Samuel*, ed. 2, p. lxiv.

and been transmitted, along with fresh mistakes of purely Greek origin, by later copyists or translators. Until further proof is forthcoming, so complicated a theory may be neglected.

The text was, of course, unpointed and the vocalization often widely different from that of the Masoretes. There was no spacing and a title or colophon was liable to be treated as part of the text. Abbreviations were employed, especially in the terminations of words. An unvocalized text, confusion of letters and abbreviation, actual or assumed, were thus potent sources of error. Labouring under such grave difficulties, presented by their crabbed exemplars, it is no wonder that the translators often misread and blundered over the Hebrew before them.

But beside these errors of eye or mind, we occasionally meet with apparent errors of the ear. Thus in the Ezekiel translation there is constant confusion between נָלִילִים ("idols") and עֲלִילּוֹת ("practices"). Here the interchange of the terminations is attributable to the abbreviated script already mentioned; the confusion of the initial gutturals, on the other hand, suggests mishearing or mispronunciation. My friend Canon Cooke, Regius

Professor of Hebrew at Oxford, who has long been engaged on an edition of Ezekiel for the *International Critical Commentary*, has collected further instances in that book. The explanation, if correct, gives us a glimpse of the translators at work in their *scriptorium*. For two prophetical books (Jeremiah and Ezekiel) we may confidently infer that they worked in pairs. At the middle point of either book the style changes; in other words, one of the pair takes up the pen where the other lays it down. But these errors of the ear suggest that they co-operated throughout, one dictating the Hebrew, the other translating. If so, the practice of the translators of two thousand years ago is strangely reproduced by their modern Cambridge editors, who habitually employ the method of dictation and realize both the economy of time resulting from it and also the care in pronunciation necessary to avoid mistakes.

The Alexandrians were not merely translators but interpreters of Scripture, and as such allowed themselves a certain latitude in translation. Their methods of interpretation find parallels in Palestinian exegesis and have apparently been influenced by it. Such influ-

ence, as has already been suggested, may be sufficiently explained by the close relations existing in the early Ptolemaic age between the two countries; Fraenkel,¹ who was the first to call attention to it, never questioned the Alexandrian origin of the translation. A prominent characteristic common to the Alexandrian and Palestinian scholars is their avoidance of anthropomorphisms and of phrases which seemed derogatory to the Deity. The Targums, as I need not remind you, emphasize the transcendence of the Deity; everything in the text that implies direct communion between God and man or attributes human action or properties to God is eliminated, toned down or explained away; an intermediary agent is constantly interposed. The Greek translators did not go so far in this direction; but they were careful to paraphrase passages where a literal version appeared irreverent. Thus in Exod. iv. 16, of Aaron's subordination to Moses, they avoid the comparison of Moses to God, substituting for "Thou shalt be to him as God," "Thou shalt be unto him (a counsellor) in matters pertaining to God." In xv. 3, for "The Lord is a man of war," they write

¹ *Ueber den Einfluss der Palästinischen Exegese auf die Alexandrinische Hermeneutik*, Leipzig, 1851.

"The Lord is a breaker of wars." In the scene on Sinai (xxiv. 10 f.) the repeated statement that Moses and his companions on the mount beheld God is altered; instead we find, "They saw the place where God stood" and "They *were seen* in the place of God." Here it is tempting to connect the LXX use of *tóπος* with the Rabbinic name of the Deity, *Makom*, "The omnipresent." In the same context, where the Hebrew has "Upon the elect of Israel *He laid not His hand*," the anthropomorphism is avoided, alike by LXX and Targum, by the omission of the agent; "not one expired" is the LXX paraphrase. Throughout the Greek Bible there is a tendency to replace such expressions as "the hand," "the mouth," or "in the eyes of God," by more abstract phrases ("the strength," "the voice," "before Him"), though the practice is far from universal. "He slumbers not nor sleeps." Hence Jeremiah's bold figure of speech, representing Jahweh as "rising early" to send His prophets, cannot stand; the translators substitute "in the morning." "God is not a man that He should repent." Hence, in Gen. vi. 6, in place of "It repented the Lord that He had made man, and it grieved Him at His heart," we find in the Greek "And

God reflected (*ἐνεθυμήθη*) that he had made man and considered" (*διενοήθη*). In the same context (vi. 2) "the sons of God" who took wives of the daughters of men become "the angels of God"; fallen angels were intelligible, but the translators shrank from a phrase which might recall immoral ideas of the Greek gods and their amours with mortals. The comparison of God to a rock is constantly paraphrased as suggestive of idolatry, and from similar motives the Psalmist's words "The Lord God is a sun and shield" (Psa. lxxxiv. 12) are boldly altered to "The Lord God loveth mercy and truth."

The translators were thus at pains to shun phraseology reminiscent, however remotely, of the polytheistic ideas of their Greek and Egyptian neighbours. That the Diaspora were not everywhere proof against the corrupting influence of their foreign surroundings we know from the degenerate religion of another colony further up the Nile at Elephantine. Against such degeneracy the Alexandrians, in common with their Palestinian brethren, resolutely set their face.

I pass to the most important aspect of the Greek Bible. Its supreme value for the modern

critic is that it serves as a check upon the Masoretic text and enables us in places to restore an older Hebrew text behind it. It must be remembered that it is a translation of a text older by a millennium than our oldest Hebrew MS.; and though the standard Hebrew text may have been transmitted practically unaltered since the days of Akiba, the LXX goes back some centuries earlier and indicates that considerable revision took place in the interval. Its usefulness in this respect must not be exaggerated, but, with all its imperfections, it does supply us, from time to time, with the materials for the reconstruction of a text superior to that of our modern Bibles.

In illustration of the aid afforded by the old Greek versions I will take the extant fragments of the oldest of Hebrew song-books, the book of Jasher.¹ I am not concerned with the poems themselves, but with some obscured titles embedded in them, giving us a tantalizing glimpse into the earlier history of that primitive work. Three such extracts have come down to us. On one of these the LXX, though baffling and obscure, sheds considerable light

¹ I have treated this more fully in an article in the *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. xi (1910), pp. 518-532.

(indeed, it is only from the LXX that we know that the passage stood in the book of Jasher); in a second another Greek version, that of Aquila, comes to our aid; in the third the Greek versions are not helpful and all our texts have gone astray.

The ancient poems included in the prose narratives of the Old Testament, or several of them, seem to have been drawn from older anthologies and to have carried with them, or had attached to them, titles or notes telling us something of their previous history or intended use. With no modern devices to indicate their character, these titles have, not unnaturally, in one or more of our texts, sometimes in all of them, been incorporated into the poems or otherwise misinterpreted. The title may stand either at the head of the poem or, as a docket, at the foot. In the Psalm of Habakkuk we have musical directions in both places. That Psalm, moreover, affords a concrete instance of the confusion of which I am speaking; for the final docket, correctly understood in the Masoretic text, "For the Chief Musician, on (my) stringed instruments," in the Greek versions has been treated as part of the poem. The late Dr. Burney has shown that the oldest of Old Testament poems, the

Song of Deborah, had a title prefixed to it which in all our texts has similarly been incorporated into the song.

I turn, then, to the extracts from the book of Jasher. In the Revised Version the dirge over Saul and Jonathan is introduced by the words "And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son; and he bade them teach the children of Judah (the song of) the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jasher" (2 Sam. i. 17 f.). It is strange how slow commentators in general have been to recognize that we have here another title. "And he bade them teach." The Hebrew is נִיאָכֶר לְלִפְנֵי: "And he said" (and then the title begins) "For instruction." The identical phrase occurs in the title of Psa. lx (Greek *εἰς διδαχήν*); the song is intended "to be committed to memory for recitation." In the Psalm title the verb "to teach" governs no object; so here the words "the children of Judah" are not dependent on the verb, but a distinct portion of the title, which I take to mean "Belonging to the collection entitled Children of Judah."¹ The

¹ The preposition נִיאָכֶר would drop out when the disjointed title was converted into a connected sentence.

late Dr. Cheyne, one of the few to recognize that the words are a title, proposed the emendation "For the sons of Jeduthun," on the analogy of such Psalm titles as "To the sons of Korah"; the next passage to be considered will, I hope, show that no alteration of the text is required. The final word "bow," absent from the LXX, remains unexplained.

The next of the Jasher fragments—Joshua's address to the sun¹—will illustrate the importance of one of the later Greek versions. The Masoretic text has the prefatory statement: "Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel: and he said in the sight of Israel (לְעֵינֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל)." Then follows the stanza, originally probably of three lines only, not four, "Sun upon Gibeon, halt," etc.; and then the reference to the source, "Is not this written in the book of Jasher?"

As in the song of Deborah and the dirge of David, so here we find certain words interposed between the introductory *loquitur* and the poem. Here we read: "And he said—in the eyes of Israel." A very natural addition, it may be said. The amazing miracle must be

¹ Jos. x. 12 f.

attested by a host of witnesses: the army halts with eyes fixed on the heavens as their leader pronounces his adjuration. But when one discovers, with surprise, that the phrase "in the eyes of Israel" as here used is unique, suspicions of the text are aroused. Elsewhere we have "in the eyes of—the children of Israel," "of the elders of Israel," "of all the house of Israel," "of all Israel." Nowhere do we find "in the eyes of Israel" where the nation as a whole is intended. A personal name of this kind needs some adjunct such as "all" to show that it is used collectively; the bare name can refer only to an individual, as in the phrase "in the eyes of Pharaoh" and the like. Israel here ought similarly to bear a personal sense; but we can hardly suppose that the miracle is wrought for the edification of the deceased patriarch.

We turn, then, to the Greek versions. The uncial MSS. of the LXX omit both the words "in the eyes of Israel" ¹ preceding the stanza and the mention of the book of Jasher which follows it. Neither clause apparently stood in

¹ One cursive (55 = h of the Cambridge edition) inserts them in the Masoretic form *κατ' ὄφθαλμοὺς Ἰσραὴλ*; another group writes *κατ' ὄφθαλμοὺς παντὸς Ἰσραὴλ*. Here the requisite "all" is inserted, but the text has manifestly been "doctored."

the Alexandrian Bible. But, on consulting the later Palestinian versions, we make the important discovery that Aquila¹ in place of לְעַנִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל found in his Hebrew text “to the children of Israel.” Aquila’s at first sight harder reading is undoubtedly right. The parallel with the dirge indicates that the words are a title: “(Belonging) to the (collection) Children of Israel.” But a title in such a position could not fail to be misinterpreted. The words “And he said (*title* To the Children of Israel), Sun stand still,” would inevitably become “And he said to the children of Israel, Sun stand still”; and the latter, being nonsense, would demand emendation such as we find in the Masoretic text.

But if Aquila’s reading and this interpretation of it are right, we have gained some insight into the nature of the lost song-book. We learn that, like the Psalter, it comprised minor collections, and we have recovered from these two fragments the names of two of them, “The Children of Judah,” and “The Children of Israel.” The names are complementary and therefore not improbably those of

¹ As attested by the Syro-hexaplar (Field, *Hexapla*, *in loc.*). According to this authority, for “he said” Aquila’s text strangely had the plural “they said.”

the two main collections. Unlike the title of the post-exilic Korah anthology, drawn from a guild of temple-singers, these titles are taken from the two territorial divisions of Palestine under the divided monarchy. We cannot but recall the parallel of the two ancient prose narratives in our Bible, associated with the Southern and the Northern Kingdom respectively. Criticism has taught us that these primitive annals of the nation's history (J and E) were subsequently welded into a single narrative (JE). Is it too daring a speculation to infer from these titles that the songs of North and South were similarly first collected in the two districts which gave them birth and afterwards combined into a national anthology?

The third known fragment of the book of Jasher is the stanza which is put into Solomon's mouth at the dedication of the Temple (I Kings viii). The LXX alone names the source from which it is drawn, besides offering us a text widely differing from the traditional Hebrew and, for all its obscurity, manifestly older. This notorious passage has exercised the ingenuity of many scholars. Without attempting to elucidate the stanza as a whole, I will confine myself to the interpretation of a single line. A comparison of the Hebrew and

Greek texts is here of exceptional interest. In the Masoretic text of this passage we have, I suppose, the clearest instance of editorial revision to be found in the Old Testament. Its delusive smoothness conceals the process of transposition, mutilation and adaptation which has apparently produced it. The Greek is the work of a faithful but unintelligent translator, struggling with a possibly corrupt, but as yet unedited, Hebrew.

You will remember that after the installation of the ark the cloud descended upon the house "so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord." At this point the Masoretic text interposes the following words (1 Kings viii. 12 f.): "Then spake Solomon, The Lord hath said that He would dwell in the thick darkness; I have surely built Thee a house of habitation (Heb. 'of Zebul'), a place for Thee to dwell in for ever." There is no indication that the words are drawn from any extraneous source. The "thick darkness" (*עֲרָפָה*) in the first line is intentionally brought into conjunction with the cloud or glory of the Lord; and the general sense is that God has deigned to let His *Shekinah* take up its abode in the new temple.

The LXX has no equivalent utterance of Solomon at this point, but lower down, after the long dedication prayer, it inserts what is clearly a variant form of the same passage (viii. 53 LXX) : "Then spake Solomon concerning the house when he had finished building it :

The sun did the Lord make known in heaven :
He hath said that He will dwell in darkness.
Build My house, a house of splendour for thyself,
To dwell upon newness.

Behold is not this written in the book of (the song ? "

It will be noted that there is here an additional obscure line about the sun at the beginning and a reference to the source of the quotation at the close. The last line of the stanza, "to dwell upon newness," is, moreover, shorter than the corresponding line in the Hebrew.

I pass over the obscurities of the earlier lines, merely recalling Professor Burkitt's restoration of the first as an address to the sun: "Sun shine forth in the heaven." I confine myself to the close, the mention of the source and the line preceding. "Is it not written in the song-book ? " Undoubtedly the book of the song (*השִׁיר*) may be identified with that elsewhere called the book of Jashar (*הִשְׁעָר*), though which, if either, of these was

the original title, may be questioned. I venture to think that the title was neither השיר nor יִשְׁרֵר, being drawn, according to Hebrew practice, from the introductory phrase אָנוּ יִשְׁרֵר ("then sang") which is found elsewhere.¹

The last line of the stanza runs in the Masoretic text :

מֹכֶן לְשִׁבְתְּךָ עַזְלָמִים

("A place for thee to dwell in for ever"),

and in the Greek τοῦ κατοικεῖν ἐπὶ καινότητος

("To dwell upon newness")

—a strange phrase by which the translator apparently meant "to dwell in a freshly built house." The Masoretic "*a place for thee* to dwell in for ever" is a straightforward expression, paralleled in this context and elsewhere, and if it stood alone would pass unquestioned. Fortunately we have the Greek by which to check it. The Greek has no equivalent for "a place" and no personal suffix "for thee," simply τοῦ κατοικεῖν. *Brevior lectio potior* is a sound canon of textual criticism : the shorter reading is preferable. Omitting noun and suffix, we are left with an

¹ Exod. xv. 1 (Song of Moses), Numb. xxi. 17 (Song of the Well).

unvocalized **לשבת** as the original of **τοῦ κατοικεῖν**; and this can surely have but one meaning, "For the sabbath." We have here, it seems, another obscured title, analogous to that of Psa. xcii, "For the sabbath day." If this conjecture is right, the following words, **ἐπὶ καινότητος**, must also belong to the title. Here we require a Hebrew word which will account at once for the Greek rendering and for the Masoretic **שולם** ("for ever"). I was fortunate enough to find the clue which meets the requirements in a phrase used in the titles of three Psalms, twice in a corrupted form, namely, the musical direction **על עלומות**. The noun is the plural of **עלמה** ("young woman"), and the direction is interpreted to mean "in maidenlike style"—in other words, "for soprano voices"; that boys' voices are meant is made probable by the addition of **לבן** in the title of Psa. ix. **עלמות** is easily confused both with the cognate **עלומים** ("youthful vigour," "freshness") and with **שולם** ("for ever"). Moreover, this twofold confusion actually occurs in Greek versions of the Psalter, Aquila in the title of Psa. xlvi (xlv) writing **ἐπὶ νεανιοτήτων**, "on youthfulness (es)," Symmachus **ὑπὲρ τῶν αἰώνιων** "for the eternities." The whole line then runs: "For the sabbath. For soprano voices."

The transformation which this title (if correctly restored) has undergone in the Masoretic text is surprising, but little more remarkable than that which in the Psalm of Habakkuk has converted the Masoretic rubric “For the chief musician on stringed instruments” into the Greek “to conquer in his song.” And here, as there, the docket stands at the foot. Moreover, these very words “on Alamoth” once occupied the same position at the end of Psa. xlviij, where they have been corrupted to מות לְעֵד, rendered in English versions “unto death.”

A musical note of this kind can hardly be pre-exilic. The LXX thus reveals two stages in the history of Solomon’s stanza. Not only did it stand in the old song book, but it was afterwards apparently taken up into one of the minor Psalters, set to music and used, or designed for use, on the Sabbath. We know on good authority that the whole chapter in which the stanza occurs was read in portions at the oldest of the festivals, the Feast of Tabernacles.

This leads me to a further and final aspect of the Greek Bible, the “liturgical” aspect, as I would venture to call it. I refer to the light

which it occasionally sheds on or derives from Jewish worship ; the text and the ritual are here mutually illuminative. Whether the translation was made for lectionary use in the Alexandrian synagogues is an open question ; but there is no doubt that in isolated passages it preserves a text which only a knowledge of the ritual elucidates and proves to be correct. Instances from Psa. lxxvi. 10 and Psa. cxviii. 27 are given in my Schweich Lectures.¹ Again, it has transmitted to us certain books, not in the Hebrew Bible, which, if I am not mistaken, are of purely liturgical origin. To one of these books I would draw special attention to-day.

To the version of Jeremiah the Greek Bible appends a little trilogy, consisting of the book of Baruch, the Lamentations, and the so-called Epistle of Jeremy. They are linked to the prophecy by the names of their alleged authors, the seer and his secretary ; but, if I read them aright, there is a further link in the occasions for which they were designed, and they bear a close relationship to some of the principal fasts in the Jewish calendar. One only of the three—Lamentations—stands in the Hebrew Bible, where its position among the

¹ Pp. 71 f., 75 f.

Megilloth denotes its connexion with the services of one of the sacred seasons, namely, the fast of the 9th Ab. The origin of the other two is obscure. They have survived only in Greek, but there is ground for believing that both once existed in Hebrew.

Of the canonical book of Lamentations and its connexion, from immemorial antiquity, with the fast of the 9th Ab, it is unnecessary to speak. In the opinion of the late Dr. Driver,¹ it is, if not actually the work of Jeremiah, unquestionably the work of a contemporary; and that it was composed from the first for the liturgical use to which it has always been put there is every reason to believe.

Nor need I dwell on the book of Baruch, of which I have spoken elsewhere.² The whole is a liturgical composition, designed, as the prefatory letter informs us, for use in public worship on certain days not clearly defined (i. 14). The body of the work falls into three well-marked portions: (1) A confession of sins, (2) a homily on Wisdom, and (3) a series of seven cantos of consolation; which adapt it for use on (1) the three

¹ *Introduction to Literature of the O.T.*, ed. 4, p. 435.

² *The Septuagint and Jewish Worship*, Lecture III.

sabbaths of penitence which preceded the 9th Ab, (2) the 9th Ab itself, and (3) the seven sabbaths of consolation which followed it. The whole structure of the book fits this ancient cycle with extraordinary nicety. Whether it was ever used in public worship or not, that, I have no doubt, was the occasion for which it was designed.

But it is the third of the three appendices to the Greek prophetical book of which I wish particularly to speak—the little pamphlet known as the Epistle of Jeremy. The liturgical associations of its two companions—well established in the one case and inferred with high probability in the other—raise a presumption that it too had a similar origin and is connected with a Jewish fast. The nature of the work pointed to the fast of the 17th Tammuz. A recent study of the Epistle, while failing to bring me the kind of evidence of which I was in search, led to an unlooked-for discovery, which confirms me in this belief.

The Epistle of Jeremy is a tirade against the folly of idolatry. Professing to be a letter addressed by Jeremiah to the Judæan exiles on the eve of their deportation to Babylon, it warns them of the length of captivity awaiting them (which is to last, not for the seventy

years named in the canonical book, but “for seven generations”), of the idolatry which they will witness, and of the temptations to which these sights will expose them. The following homily shows by a variety of arguments the impotence for good or ill of these gods of wood and silver and stone. The florid and rhetorical style of the Epistle has convinced most commentators that the Greek in which it has come down to us was the language in which it was originally written. This widespread opinion has, I think, been overthrown by the late Dr. Charles Ball, who produced at least one convincing instance where an obscurity in the Greek can be explained by a confusion between two indistinguishable Hebrew words—*shēsh* (“marble”) and *shēsh* (“fine linen”). The Greek in v. 72 runs, “Ye shall know them to be no gods by the purple and *marble* that rotteth upon them.” But this is nonsensical: marble does not rot. Adopt the other sense of *shēsh*, and we have the familiar combination “purple and fine linen.” The Greek is, then, a paraphrastic rendering of a lost Hebrew original.

Denunciations of idolatry are frequent in the canonical Scriptures, but it is not surprising to find the closest parallel to our Epistle in the passage on that subject included in the

foregoing prophetic book (Jer. x. 1-16). The Epistle may be described as a homily on Jer. x; indeed, its origin may almost be traced to a single verse of that chapter (v. 11). That verse is peculiar in being the only one in the whole of Jeremiah written in Aramaic; in Dr. Driver's words, it was "probably originally a marginal note . . . intended as a reply which might be used by Jews living in heathen countries, when invited to take part in idol worship."¹ And here the parallel between the Epistle and the Targum is instructive. On the basis of that same verse, the Targum has, in curiously similar fashion, constructed a brief letter to the exiles in Babylon, emphasizing the general impotence of idols and naming a particular instance of such impotence, also mentioned in our Epistle, viz. their inability to send rain. We thus see the conception of a warning letter against idolatry taking shape. The germ is the Aramaic note which has crept into the text of Jeremiah: in the Targum this is expanded into a brief letter: in the Greek Bible we have the full-fledged Epistle. Chronologically, however, I should regard the Epistle as older than the Targum.

¹ *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah* (1906), *in loc.*

Now, the Epistle is not an academical polemic against idolatry at large. The author possibly himself witnessed, if not at Babylon, at Byblus, the rites which he ridicules; at all events, his allusions are vivid and strictly localized. No Egyptian trait enters into the picture: the deification of animals, satirized in the Alexandrian Book of Wisdom, is ignored. The idolatry of Babylon is solely in view; and—here is the important point—though he speaks of “*gods*” in general and only once mentions a name (“*Bel*,” v. 41), he appears throughout to have but one deity of the Babylonian pantheon in mind, the god Tammuz—the god of the spring vegetation, the mourning ceremony for whose death was held at mid-summer in the month to which he gave his name. The Epistle contains one unmistakable reference to the gravest scandal in the Tammuz ritual, besides other striking parallels.

(1) In v. 43 we read of the prostitutes who sit in the ways with cords about them, until the cord is broken by a passer-by to indicate his selection of a paramour. This practice is mentioned by three classical writers. Herodotus, who gives the fullest description of what he calls “the most disgraceful of Babylonian customs,” mentions the crowns of rope

which the women wear on their heads, and tells us that these rites were paid to the goddess "Mylitta, the Assyrian name for Aphrodite"—in other words, Ishtar the consort of Tammuz. Strabo mentions the same headgear and connects the rite with "a certain feast of Aphrodite." Lucian describes a similar ceremony as forming part of the mourning for Adonis (otherwise Tammuz) held at the temple of Aphrodite at Byblus, and adds a detail which explains the chaplet of cord, viz. that prostitution was a penalty imposed on the women who refused to shave their heads in token of mourning for the dead Adonis.¹

(2) Again, the Tammuz ritual was essentially a funeral ceremony, and that is just what is described in our Epistle. We read of "the offerings set before" the gods "as if they were dead men" (v. 27), and again of the priests with "their clothes rent and their heads and beards shaven, and nothing upon their heads. They roar and cry before their gods, as men do at a dead man's funeral feast" (*περίδειπνον*, v. 31 f.). Just so, in Lucian's words, "after beating of the breast and lamentation they make offerings to Adonis as

¹ Herodotus, i. 199; Strabo, xvi. 20 (745); Lucian, *De dea Syria* 6 (454).

to a dead man . . . and they shave their heads."

(3) Women played the principal part in the mourning for Tammuz, as we know from Ezekiel's allusion to it (viii. 14). So here it is the women who set meat before the gods (v. 30), who, though unclean, touch their sacrifices (v. 29), and who receive the perquisites from the priests (vv. 28, 33).

(4) The image of Tammuz was washed, anointed and dressed up in gay apparel. "Wash Tammuz with pure water, anoint him with good oil, clothe him with red sparkling raiment": so runs a fragment of a hymn in his honour.¹ Our Epistle mentions the wiping and polishing (13, 24), the dressing-up, "as it were for a virgin that loveth to go gay" (9), and the purple raiment (12, 72).

(5) Tammuz was a god of healing, and demoniacs were brought to him. So in our Epistle a dumb man is brought to Bel to be cured (v. 41.) As healer Tammuz bore a double axe;² in the Epistle the god has a dagger in his right hand and an axe (15).

¹ Zimmern, *Der babylonische Gott Tamuz*, in *Abhandlungen der philol.-hist. Klasse der Königlich Sachsisch. Gesellschaft d. Wissenschaften*, xxvii. 734, Leipzig, 1909.

² Langdon, *Tammuz und Ishtar*, 33-36.

(6) The dying and rising god was also credited with powers of irrigation ; he was " lord of the flood "—that is, of the springs arising from the earth.¹ Yet, retorts our Epistle, these gods cannot give rain unto men (53).

(7) Lastly, the rather strange comparison of the idols to " crows between heaven and earth " (54) suggests images suspended from a temple roof ; elsewhere we read of their falling to the ground (27). So in a tale of " Tammuz the prophet," quoted from Maimonides by the late Dr. Aldis Wright,² we read of a golden image of the sun suspended between heaven and earth in the temple of Babel and how this image fell to the ground on the night on which Tammuz died.

These parallels, I submit, conclusively prove that the Epistle is designed as a denunciation of Tammuz worship. May we go further and trace any connexion with the Jewish fast of the 17th Tammuz ? The fast of the fourth month, the blackest, after the 9th Ab, of the national fast-days, dates back, as we learn from Zechariah (viii. 19), at least to the time of the exile. And though regarded as specially commemorating the Babylonian

¹ Langdon, *Tammuz und Ishtar*, 6.

² Smith, *Bible Dictionary*, art. " Tammuz."

capture of Jerusalem, it appears to have had older associations with idolatry in general and the Tammuz cult in particular. The Dutch scholar Houtsma¹ has shown ground for believing that the historical basis of the fast days is of a secondary character. That of the 17th Tammuz was, according to him, originally connected with the Tammuz cult, and the association with the capture of the city was a later attempt to give an ancient festival a worthier interpretation. Ezekiel's vision of the women weeping for Tammuz (viii. 14) is doubtless based upon fact. But though this origin was concealed, a memory of the connexion of the day with idolatry was retained. Of the five calamities which tradition (T. B. *Taanith* iv. 6) assigned to the 17th Tammuz, one was the capture of the city by Nebuchadnezzar; two relate to idolatry, namely, the breaking of the tables of the Law (consequent upon the worship of the golden calf) and the setting up of an image in the Temple; the other two were desecrations of a not dissimilar character.

A denunciation of Tammuz worship would therefore be in keeping with the oldest associa-

¹ Quoted by Jastrow, *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, 682.

tions of the fast-day; but to establish a connexion between the Epistle and the 17th Tammuz further proof is required. For this I turned to the records of the ancient ritual. The Epistle, as was said, is dependent on Jer. x, just as the homily in *Baruch* is dependent on the preceding chapter (Jer. ix). Jer. ix, we know, was the *Haftarah* for the 9th Ab; it was natural to ask, May not Jer. x have been the *Haftarah* for the 17th Tammuz? Here, I must admit, the evidence is lacking: our information, so far as I can discover, about the ancient lessons peculiar to the 17th Tammuz, is meagre. What we do know is that the lessons common to all fast-days included portions of Exodus xxxii-xxxiv and Isaiah lv-lvi; also that the special Psalm for 17 Tammuz in both modern rituals, and therefore of high antiquity, is Psa. lxxix. Of these passages, the Exodus lesson, with its reference to the breaking of the tables (xxxiv. 1), was clearly selected as appropriate to 17 Tammuz; and it is interesting to note that an allusion to that lesson stands in the foremost of our Epistle. "For mine angel is with you and he careth for your souls" (Ep. Jer. 7), is clearly an echo of Exod. xxxii. 34: "Behold mine angel shall go before thee: neverthe-

less . . . I will visit their sin upon them." Here we have a link between the Epistle and the first lesson for the fast-day. Again, Psa. lxxix ("O God, the heathen are come into Thine inheritance") is not only wholly appropriate to the fast, but includes two verses which reappear in Jer. x; commentators are uncertain on which side the indebtedness lies, but this borrowing suggests the possibility that the Jeremiah passage, like the Psalm, was connected with the fast and that one portion of the service has reacted on the other. The Isaiah lesson has no close connexion with the ideas associated with the 17th Tammuz. For that fast-day, as for the 9th Ab, the original *Haftarah* is likely to have been drawn from Jeremiah, the censor of the nation, and no more appropriate passage could be found in that book than the tenth chapter, with its two topics: (1) the folly of idolatry (1-16), and (2) the end of the siege and the departure of the exiles for Babylon (17-25). That chapter, like Jer. ix, has been interpolated: in the late Dr. Driver's opinion the passage on idolatry is the work "probably of one living in the latter part of the Babylonian captivity."¹ I venture, then, to make two

¹ *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah*, p. 58.

suggestions: (1) that the ancient second lesson for the 17th Tammuz was drawn from Jer. x, and (2) that the *Epistle of Jeremy* is a homily based on that lesson, just as the sermon in *Baruch* is based on the preceding chapter of the prophetical book.

I have wandered far from Alexandria, the reputed birthplace of the Greek Bible, from which I set out. For, wherever the extant Greek of such books as *Baruch* and the *Epistle* may have been written, we must look for the original authors elsewhere than in Egypt. In what district and at what date these strange semi-liturgical works were composed—one framed to fit a cycle which was soon superseded, the other perhaps recalling memories which must soon have been allowed to pass into oblivion—we cannot say. But I hope that in this lecture, in memory of one who devoted such loving labour upon the Synagogue liturgy, I may have shown that the Greek Bible, among its other interests, raises, if it fails to solve, some problems with regard to the origins of Jewish worship.

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